

Senator Maria Cantwell

Getting Results for Washington State

Restoring Privacy to Library and Bookstore Records

Our nation's founding principles demand respect for personal privacy. That's why Senator Cantwell is working to fix provisions in the PATRIOT Act that compromise the privacy of bookstore proprietors, librarians, and their customers. The SAFE Act, which Cantwell has cosponsored, would protect our nation's borders as well as our right to privacy by rolling back PATRIOT Act provisions that allow the federal government to acquire private records as part of secret, open-ended investigations into the activities of law-abiding Americans. Instead, government investigators would have to show a specific connection between the records they seek and a suspected terrorist or spy. In April 2005, Cantwell called on the Senate Judiciary Committee to hold hearings on the bill, and will continue to push for a national security policy that doesn't compromise our civil liberties.

Addressing the Connection between Identity Theft and Meth Abuse

The growing connection between identity theft, the nation's fastest-growing crime, and the use and production of methamphetamines, is an issue raised often during Cantwell's meetings with law enforcement officials from across Washington state. For example, according to the Spokane County Sheriff, 100 percent of the county's large-scale identity theft cases in 2004 included meth connections. In response, Senator Cantwell introduced legislation to begin a national study of this troubling trend. Her bill, "The Methamphetamine and Identity Theft Study Act," would also create a national database allowing federal, state, and local law enforcement to share information on crimes involving meth and identity theft, giving them an additional resource in the fight against both crimes.

Advocating for Innovative, Home-Grown Solutions to our Energy Needs

Recent hikes in gas and energy rates show the volatility of relying heavily on foreign fuel. Increased use of biofuels would help ease the burden on consumers while creating jobs locally. To support home-grown energy sources, Cantwell added language to the energy bill recently signed into law that boosts domestic research, development, and demonstration of advanced biofuels production technologies. To make biofuels cost-effective, we must make certain advances that allow for the production of fuel from a more diverse range of sources. Today, most biofuels are made from corn and soy—crops primarily grown in the Midwest. A recent WSU study estimated that Washington has enough wheat straw to produce about 200 million gallons of ethanol—and 1.2 billion gallons with technology improvements. By working to accelerate the development of clean, plant-based fuels, Senator Cantwell is helping to initiate an important step toward emissions reduction, while at the same time decreasing our dependence on foreign oil.

Standing Up to Price Gouging

When disasters strike, we need to make sure we have a plan to protect American consumers. With drivers in Washington state paying 97 cents a gallon more than last year, we need to put oil companies on notice that profiteering at the gas pump will not be tolerated—especially during national emergencies. To prevent price gouging at the pump, Cantwell introduced legislation in September 2005 to ban manipulation in the oil and gasoline markets and implement new investigation and enforcement mechanisms. Her bill will promote transparency by requiring full disclosure of wholesale gas pricing policies, and enact stronger enforcement authority for the Federal Trade Commission, Department of Energy, and Department of Justice. It will also allow the President to declare national energy emergencies, and trigger a federal ban on price gouging. With oil companies racking up record profits and other industries like agriculture and airlines taking a devastating hit, we need to demand some accountability. We learned our lesson with Enron, and there's no reason the oil industry should not be subject to some of the same rules as other types of energy companies.

Promoting Fair Competition for America's Aerospace Workers

Currently, Cantwell is working with a bipartisan group of senators to call on European governments to reject unfair subsidies for Airbus, and worked to pass a resolution supporting the president's authority to take action to protect American aerospace jobs. Airbus has benefited from a unique subsidy known as "launch aid," which is risk-free, low-cost government funding for the development of new lines of aircraft. The company only needs to repay the loans if the new product succeeds. This means Airbus remains unfettered by marketplace realities, while American companies must assume realistic levels of commercial risk. For this reason, Senator Cantwell also wrote to Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick asking him to redouble his efforts to get a commitment from the European Union to stop its support of launch aid.